Mediterranean Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences (MJBAS)
Volume 10, Issue 2, Pages 271-283, April-June 2026

Understanding the Challenges of Community Engagement in Urban Policing: A Qualitative Exploration

Nhielfey Fria S. Colango[1], Angel Mae A. Abule[2], Ronald Pakyao[3*], Joseph Astorga[4], Teopisto Y. Culanag Jr.[5] & Jose F. Cuevas Jr.[6]

[1-4]*Student, College of Criminology, Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines.*
[5]*Faculty, College of Criminology, Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines.*
[6]*Dean, College of Criminology, Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines.*
Corresponding Author Email: ronaldpakyao23@gmail.com[*]

DOI: https://doi.org/10.46382/mjbas.2026.10217

Copyright © 2026 Nhielfey Fria S. Colango et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Article Received: 12 March 2026 *Article Accepted: 17 May 2026* *Article Published: 22 May 2026*

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological research sought to investigate community members' perceptions of urban policing in Ozamiz City. Through interviews conducted on ten long-standing community members, six themes emerged which pointed to community feelings about the police force as well as difficulties in accessing them. In general, it can be seen that findings highlight how fear and previous negative engagements can prevent community members from participating in policing efforts, yet community policing efforts can still work to increase community trust through persistent community presence.

Keywords: Community Engagement; Urban Policing; Police–Community Relations; Public Trust in Law Enforcement; Community Policing Strategies; Urban Crime Prevention; Police Legitimacy; Citizen Participation; Qualitative Research; Perceived Policing Challenges.

1.0. Introduction

Policing is a vital institution responsible for maintaining public order and community safety, yet trust between law enforcement and the public has fluctuated due to social change, misconduct, and historical tensions, particularly in urban settings characterized by diversity and socioeconomic inequality (Miller, 2023; Contreras & Cribbs-Lorrant, 2025; Blair et al., 2021; Lovan & Richer, 2024; Barry, 2023; Yigzaw et al., 2023). Community policing emphasizes partnership, trust, and shared responsibility, and strong police–community relations are linked to crime reduction, cooperation, and reduced tension, leading many agencies to implement engagement programs such as neighborhood patrols and outreach initiatives (Anderson, 2024; Toxigon, 2024; Nubani et al., 2023; De, 2025).

However, effective community engagement in urban policing remains challenged by poor communication, cultural mistrust, past negative encounters, and structural and operational barriers that limit accessibility and participation, especially among marginalized groups (Parkes-Hupton, 2025; Sevilla, 2025; Osuh, 2024; LaBella, 2025).

Addressing a gap in qualitative research, this study is guided by Procedural Justice Theory (Tyler, 1990) and Broken Windows Theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) to examine how trust, fairness, communication, and enforcement practices shape community engagement and cooperation in urban policing contexts (Goldsmith, 2005; Tornabene, 2024; Martell, 2024; McMillian, 2025).

2.0. Methods

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design guided by Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of ten long-term community members in Ozamiz City regarding community engagement in urban policing. Using purposive sampling and semi-structured, face-to-face interviews,

data were gathered from participants who met specific criteria related to residency, limited police engagement, and exposure to police operations, with ethical safeguards strictly observed in accordance with institutional approval and the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The research was conducted in selected urban areas of Ozamiz City, a setting chosen for its complex public safety concerns and relevance to police–community relations, and all data collection procedures ensured informed consent, confidentiality, and participant well-being. Data were analyzed using Moustakas' phenomenological reduction through bracketing, horizonalization, thematic clustering, textural and structural descriptions, and textural-structural synthesis, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of community members' perceptions, challenges, and insights into effective community policing.

3.0. Results and Discussions

3.1. What are community members experience in engaging with police officers in urban policing efforts?

Theme 1: Mixed Emotional Experiences from Fear and Intimidation to Comfort and Trust

This change mirrors how steady positive interactions have the power to overcome fear with knowledge so that trust can develop over time. When individuals are treated with fairness and honesty, their first fright turns into comfort and a willingness to cooperate (Li et al, 2022; Szekely et al, 2023; Vivekananda and Meenakshi, 2024). The reasoning of the participants puts a common appreciation for communication and openness at the forefront of establishing trust between the police and society (Dobson et al, 2025; Zhu Songze et al, 2024; Kulachai and Cheurprakobkit, 2023). Member 1 urges the significance of two-way communication and listening, which relates to Member 4's note that explanations improve things so that one can actually see and understand what is happening and feels less intimidated. Member 2's emphasis on heightened visibility and responsiveness confirms that presence promotes approachability, a sentiment shared by Member 6, who also appreciates openness but desires more regular contact beyond crisis situations. Combined, their opinions indicate that trust increases as police reveal fairness, accessibility, and an effort to reach out to the community. These are evident in the response of community members during the conduct of the interview:

"Always carried firearms. But over time, my perception changed. I gradually became more comfortable reaching out to the police. Even though I felt uneasy, I still respected them because I know they're doing their job." (member 1)

"Back then, things were more chaotic, but now it has become more peaceful, and my perception of them has improved. Police officers today are more polite and fair in dealing with people." (member 2)

"We were accused and imprisoned before without proper investigation. That fear caused me to lose trust in them." (member3)

"Before, I felt scared to approach them because I wasn't sure if they would listen or get angry. Now, I can see some changes; they're more approachable and easier to talk to." (member 4)

"I used to be afraid to talk to them because I didn't know how they would react. But now, since they are more visible and open, I feel more confident speaking with them.". (member 6)

The theme highlights the point that good communication, visibility, and regular interaction are the determinants of building a stronger relationship between the police and the community (Cheng et al, 2024 and Zhu Songze et al, 2024). If law enforcement officers listen actively, communicate clearly, and answer questions in a timely manner, they lessen fear and ambiguity, motivating individuals to cooperate and ask for help (Hamida Zekiroski et al, 2024 and (Jefferd Leowell Ibañez et al, 2025). Greater visibility in neighborhoods not only makes a community safer but also builds familiarity, causing citizens to perceive officers as accessible allies instead of remote figures of authority (Yesberg et al, 2023). Informed communication regarding community policing initiatives further promotes involvement, as individuals realize better what is expected of them and the purpose of such programs (Farid, 2025 and Dobson et al, 2025). More broadly, trust emerges based on fairness, openness, and ongoing interaction, bridging preliminary reserve and creating mutual respect (Fung et al, 2023 and Mutahi et al, 2024)

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that open communication and heightened police visibility greatly increase public cooperation and trust. Tyler and Huo (2002) indicate that procedural justice treatments from officers that are fair, open, and respectful fosters legitimacy and voluntary obedience to the law. Likewise, studies by Murphy et al. (2015) point out that when police use clear, consistent communication and community engagement, citizens tend to view them as reliable and accessible. These interactions minimize fear and social distance, creating an atmosphere of partnership instead of authority. In addition, Myhill and Quinton (2011) discovered that community residents are more open to providing information and engaging in crime prevention when they feel listened to and respected by the police. Moreover, recent research on community policing identifies that frequent contact, rather than mere presence during emergencies, creates sustainable trust. Gill et al. (2014) noted that ongoing, casual interaction between officers and residents enhances perceptions of safety and reinforces cooperation. As police describe their jobs, the purpose of activities is made clear, and visibility extends beyond enforcement, communities come to understand policing efforts. Regular interaction builds comfort and confidence and shows that communication and accessibility are essential in turning fear and intimidation into trust and cooperation.

The message suggests that trust between the public and the police will not be attained through enforcement, but rather through continual communication, equity, and visibility. As officers themselves become involved, justify their actions, and project a participative presence, they remove fear and ignorance, opening the doors to cooperation. Such a strategy not only increases the efficacy of community policing but also brings about shared responsibility for peace and order maintenance. By keeping transparency and constant communication paramount, law enforcement agencies are able to reverse stereotypes and turn citizens into active partners in generating safety, solving local issues, and maintaining long-term harmony.

Theme 2: Experiences of Engagement Shaped by Accessibility, Communication, and Responsiveness

Experiences of engagement are enhanced when police are responsive, communicate well, and are prompt to respond to residents' needs. These habits foster confidence and make residents feel appreciated, leading to more effective collaboration and shared responsibility for safety (Daisy et al, 2023; Galangco et al, 2022; Alehegn et al, 2025). The considerations articulated among the participants indicate a collective perception that accessibility, communication, and responsiveness define constructive interaction between the police and the public (Dobson et

al, 2025; Jr et al, 2024; Daisy and Magbojos, 2023). Member 1 underscores the importance of straightforward communication and listening as instruments to overcome hesitation and foster trust. Member 2 points out the constructive effect of enhanced visibility and fairness, demonstrating that a reliable and responsive police presence promotes approachability. Member 4 supports this by observing that good explanations lead residents to better comprehend issues in the community, and fear and uncertainty decrease. At the same time, Member 6 agrees that there is some improvement in visibility and openness but identifies a greater necessity for pro-active and frequent interactions, whereby continuous presence—apart from reacting to issues—engulfs confidence and solidifies relationships. Collectively, these observations illustrate that authentic engagement is enhanced when police are communicative, accessible, and actively present in the community. These are evident in the response of community members during the conduct of the interview:

"Better communication between the police and the community would help break down barriers. Sometimes, we hesitate to reach out because we're not sure who to approach or if they'll take our concerns seriously. When they take time to explain and listen, it makes it easier for us to trust them." (member1)

"Police officers today are more polite and fair in dealing with people. They are now more visible and respond quickly when needed. Before, they were harder to find, but now, they're more present in the community." (member 2)

"Sometimes we hesitate to approach them. We're unsure if they'll listen or if they'll get upset. Now, I can see some changes; they're more approachable and easier to talk to. When they explain things properly, it helps us understand what's happening in our community." (member 4)

"I haven't joined activities before, but with the right explanation, people can better understand what community policing is all about. Now, since they are more visible and open, I feel more confident speaking with them. Sometimes, they only come when there's a problem. It would be better if they visited more often." (member6)

The idea emphasizes that effective interaction between the police and the public is highly dependent on accessibility, communication, and timely responsiveness. Visible and accessible law enforcers reduce fear and uncertainty, enabling residents to be more confident in voicing concerns. Communication facilitates closing gaps in understanding, making community members well-informed of policing activities and their roles in upholding peace and order. Responsiveness, however, supports trust since it indicates that police listen seriously to people's worries and respond quickly to solve them. Together, these elements establish a climate of mutual respect and cooperation, where both the public and the police collaborate towards common ends of security, safety, and harmony.

Studies invariably uphold the premise that accessibility, communication, and responsiveness are at the core of building trust and cooperation between police and communities. Tyler and Huo (2002) posit that procedural justice—fairness, voice, and transparency practiced—stimulates citizens to perceive the police as legitimate and trustworthy. In like manner, research by Sunshine and Tyler (2003) indicates that when officers clearly state their intentions and treat individuals with respect, people become more likely to collaborate and provide information. Myhill and Quinton (2011) also revealed that proactive interaction and responsiveness to issues in the community

enhance policing effectiveness views, which results in citizens feeling valued and heard. Additional proof by Gill et al. (2014) indicates that visible policing and regular presence in the neighborhood create familiarity, close social distance, and reinforce public confidence. Evidence by Murphy et al. (2015) supports that responsive and timely action to citizens' needs convey responsibility and concern, essential in converting suspicion to collaboration. These studies individually and collectively confirm that accessibility, open communication, and responsiveness are not just operational methods but are crucial elements in establishing sustainable partnerships and shared responsibility among the police and the people.

The theme suggests that the creation of strong and sustainable ties between the police force and the public hinges on the availability, communicativeness, and responsiveness of law enforcement officers in their everyday encounters. When these aspects are habitually exercised, they generate trust, transparency, and mutual sense of responsibility so that members of the public can feel more secure interacting with the police. This, in turn, fosters active engagement in safety programs, open discussion of issues affecting the community, and cooperative problem-solving. But if responsiveness and accessibility are wanting, hindrances such as mistrust and apprehension can prevail, curtailing cooperation and undermining the police-community alliances. Thus, putting these principles in policing plans is indispensable for enhancing mutual understanding, responsibility, and enduring peace and order.

3.2. What structural, cultural, and operational challenges hinder community members' participation in community policing?

Theme 1: Cultural Barriers fear, Mistrust, and Negative Past Experiences Discourage Participation Cultural barriers based on fear, mistrust, and past negative experiences commonly incline the members of the community to avoid dealing with the police. These challenges should be dealt with by continuous fairness, cultural sensitivity, and attempts to restore trust through respectful and open communication (Galangco et al, 2022; Jr et al, 2024). The opinions of the participants identify the ways in which cultural barriers, informed by fear and negative past experience, continue to affect community engagement with the police (Nam et al, 2023; Hevi et al, 2022; (Patterson, 2022). Member 1 outlines the function of establishing trust through regular communication, where openness can demote hesitation informed by previous encounters. Member 2's opinion stresses the value of being present and just, revealing that better conduct and availability assist in transgressing old preconceptions and fears. Member 4 affirms this by observing that respectful interaction and plain explanation reduce the perception of police as remote and intimidating, healing long-standing distrust. In turn, Member 6 highlights the importance of regular, active engagement outside of crisis scenarios, suggesting trust must be built through frequent relationship-building to supersede fear with cooperation and mutual understanding. Together, their observations illustrate building cultural bridges involves patience, transparency, and ongoing positive interactions to substitute fear with cooperation and understanding. These are evident in the response of community members during the conduct of the interview:

"I used to feel nervous and uneasy around police officers. I felt scared of them because they always carried firearms. "Even though I felt uneasy, I still respected them because I know they're doing their job."(member 1)

"Before, I felt scared to approach them because I wasn't sure if they would listen or get angry. Sometimes we hesitate to approach them. We're unsure if they'll listen or if they'll get upset." (member 4)

"I used to be afraid to talk to them because I didn't know how they would react. I was nervous at first because I thought they might get mad if I said something wrong." (member6)

The theme identifies that cultural barriers in terms of fear, mistrust, and past negative experiences are the main obstacles towards community engagement in police initiatives. Historical cases of biased treatment, perceived discrimination, or insufficient transparency taints memories, leading residents to be reluctant to approach the police. These cultural and emotional barriers undermine cooperation since people might question whether their opinions will be considered or their safety ensured. Conquering these obstacles calls for affirmative exhibition of fairness, respect, and cultural sensitivity on the part of police as well as effective communication and sincere people's participation. By successive positive engagement and inclusive practices, mistrust can be progressively substituted by trust, urging active engagement and shared responsibility for keeping peace and order.

Studies have identified that fear, mistrust, and negative experiences based on cultural barriers considerably affect the way communities deal with the police. Tyler and Huo (2002) highlight that procedural justice being dealt with in a fair, dignified, and respectful manner is critical to establishing legitimacy and dispelling entrenched mistrust. Weitzer and Tuch (2005) also discovered that past histories of discrimination and unequal treatment condition negative views of the police, especially among minority groups. These researches show that communities are less inclined to cooperate or engage in community-based programs when they perceive policing as bias or abuse, entrenching a disengagement and miscommunication cycle. Additionally, studies by Murphy and Cherney (2012) indicate that trust can be rebuilt through long-term strategies with a focus on transparency, accountability, and culturally responsive engagement. Research by Skogan (2006) also proves that positive, routine interactions with police officers can eventually reverse negative previous experiences, affirming notions of fairness and openness. Overall, these results indicate that overcoming cultural obstacles entails more than policy reforms—it necessitates purposeful relationship-building, repetitive respectful conduct, and the building of inclusive spaces within which community members feel heard and respected.

The underlying theme is that transcending cultural barriers of fear, mistrust, and past resentment is crucial to encouraging meaningful community involvement in policing. When such barriers continue to exist, they undermine confidence, dissuade participation, and drive a wedge between police and the public. In response, police need to embrace culturally responsive practices, remain fair and transparent, and focus on building trust by providing consistent, respectful contact. By doing so, not only do damaged relationships get mended but also inclusivity is promoted, enabling communities to become engaged partners in sustaining peace, security, and social harmony.

Theme 2: Structural and Operational Barriers Limited Awareness, Poor Communication, and Inaccessible Programs

Operational and structural barriers like narrow awareness, poor communication, and inaccessible programs limit community involvement in policing programs. Overcoming these through transparent information sharing,

participatory planning, and accessible activities can enhance collaboration and trust between the public and police (Alehegn et al, 2025; Haim et al, 2024; Ogbonnia et al, 2025). The responses of the participants indicate that unawareness, ambiguous communication, and restricted accessibility are main obstacles to active citizen participation in police programs (Alehegn et al, 2025; Kumwenda et al, 2024; Ogbonnia et al, 2025). Member 1 identifies a need for improved dissemination of information so that all citizens can become aware of current programs. Member 2 mentions the lack of specified schedules and announcements, which indicates the necessity for organized means of communication. Member 4's finding highlights exclusivity of participation, suggesting efforts at engagement are not being extended to the wider population. In contrast, Member 6 highlights geographical inaccessibility, demonstrating logistical constraints on attendance as well. Collectively, their findings demonstrate how operational and structural failures—like ineffective outreach, restricted inclusivity, and inapproachable locations—cut short opportunities for true collaboration and undermine the community policing impact potential. These are evident in the response of community members during the conduct of the interview:

"Sometimes we are not aware of community policing activities because information doesn't always reach everyone." (member 1)

"Not everyone knows how to join or participate. There are no clear schedules or announcements." (member 2)

"Most of the time, only selected people are invited to attend meetings or seminars. Others don't even know when these are held." (member 4)

"Sometimes, the activities are held in places far from our area, so not everyone can attend." (member 6)

The issue emphasizes that structural and operational barriers of limited awareness, ineffective communication, and inaccessible programs substantially hinder the participation of the community in police activities. If information about initiatives and activities is not broadly circulated, many of the residents have no idea they can participate, causing unequal participation and very little representation. Poor communication strategies, for instance, unclear announcements or failure to post regular schedules, discourage participation and cause disorientation. Furthermore, conducting activities in distant or inconvenient sites diminishes access, especially to persons with mobility, time, or resource limitations. Such obstacles undermine collaboration, inhibit inclusive conversation, and block the building of trust and shared responsibility between the police and the public.

Evidence has indicated that operation and structural barriers, including poor communication, limited awareness, and inaccessible programs, play a great role in determining the success of community policing programs. Skogan (2006) indicates that the effectiveness of community participation largely depends on program visibility and accessibility since lack of awareness contributes to low participation and poor representation of the community. Myhill (2012) also emphasizes that ineffective communication channels hinder the passage of important information, restricting residents' awareness of their responsibilities and the goals of community policing. Likewise, Gill et al. (2014) note that without defined and comprehensive outreach programs, participation becomes disproportionate and largely benefits a privileged few at the expense of marginalized groups, further entrenching perceptions of exclusion. Furthermore, research by Tyler and Huo (2002) indicates that open communication and

equal access are essential in gaining trust and legitimacy, since citizens are more likely to engage when they feel heard and respected. Further research by Murphy et al. (2015) also highlights the value of accessibility, since logistical issues—e.g., difficult locations or absence of transport—can discourage even enthusiastic participants. Together, these studies suggest that structuring and operational barriers must be addressed with purposeful planning, participatory communication, and the design of readily accessible programs to facilitate maximum participation, increase confidence, and maximize overall community policing effectiveness.

The theme suggests that without the resolution of structural and operational impediments like lack of awareness, poor communication, and inaccessibility of programs, community policing may never be able to realize true participation and trust. When the information is vague, outreach is selective, or events are conducted in inconvenient places, many members of the community get left out, undermining collaboration and mutual responsibility. This emphasizes the importance of law enforcement agencies to build transparent communication systems, inclusive planning processes, and accessible venues for creating equal opportunities for participation. By eliminating these barriers, police can build stronger community partnerships, foster active participation, and increase the overall effectiveness of policing strategies for building and maintaining peace.

3.3. In what ways do community members perceive their role and involvement in building trust and cooperation with the police in urban settings?

Theme 1: Shared Responsibility Community Members See Themselves as Partners in Maintaining Peace and Order

Shared responsibility also means a collective attitude wherein members of the community actively work with the police to maintain peace and order. Through such cooperation, mutual trust, accountability, and empowerment are reinforced that result in more long-term and participatory strategies towards community safety (Mangai et al, 2023; Tagnas et al, 2025). The views of the participants as a whole underscore a very strong emphasis on partnership and responsibility towards ensuring peace and order in the community (Alviola, 2025; Poquita et al, 2023; (Galangco et al, 2022). Member 1 underscores the notion of working together, acknowledging that safety in the community is based on concerted action and not just depending on the police. Member 2 supports this by considering residents to be participating partners, recognizing their contribution towards neighborhood security. Member 4 elaborates on this idea by emphasizing mutual support, where police and citizens collaborate and take care of each other. On the other hand, Member 6 reiterates the responsibility of every human being to act, for instance, reporting offenses, in order to avoid injury and maintain safety. Collectively, their perspectives share a common understanding that enduring peace and stability are only possible if everyone contributes, comes together, and actively participates. These are evident in the response of community members during the conduct of the interview:

"I see my role in the community as both a partner and an observer in working with the police… keeping the community safe is a shared responsibility." Member 1)

"Every resident has a responsibility to help maintain safety… I see my role in working with the police as a partner. (member 2)

"The police help organize and motivate the community, but the community also plays a big role in watching out for each other. (member 4)

"Everyone has a responsibility when it comes to peace and order. We must report crimes to help prevent them. (Member 6)

The theme is that peace and order are the collective responsibilities to be attained through concerted efforts from the police and society. When citizens see themselves as partners instead of passive bystanders, they achieve a safer community through vigilance, cooperation, and active participation. Shared responsibility breeds mutual trust and accountability since the police and the public have a mutual understanding of their joint responsibilities in crime prevention and public well-being. This strategy fosters open dialogue, cooperative problem-solving, and ownership of local security projects. Through collaboration, communities become stronger, more unified, and better equipped to resolve issues, ultimately building the foundation for enduring peace and social harmony.

Evidence concurs that co-responsibility between the police and the community is necessary in attaining long-term peace and order. Skogan (2006) affirms that community policing is successful when citizens engage in crime prevention and safety initiatives, as this promotes mutual trust and accountability. Tyler and Huo (2002) also highlight that in the event that individuals feel fairness and legitimacy when it comes to the enforcement of the law, they are more cooperative and engage in contributing to social order. Likewise, Gill et al. (2014) research finds that collaborative problem-solving strategies enable citizens to assume a role of partnership in recognizing and solving local problems and thereby enhancing community-police relations and safety outcomes. Additionally, Myhill (2012) observes that shared responsibility fosters civic engagement because it instills a spirit of ownership and empowerment among citizens. A study by Murphy et al. (2015) also demonstrates that when people feel appreciated for their contributions, they become more active in reporting crime, volunteering for schemes, and embracing schemes that strengthen neighborhood security. Together, these researches reaffirm that creating a culture of shared responsibility grounded in trust, fairness, and inclusivity emboldens cooperation, enhances public confidence, and creates safer, more resilient communities.

The theme suggests that lasting peace and order hinges on the creation of a sense of shared responsibility between the community and the police. When citizens become actively involved in safety programs and recognize themselves as partners in the government, they contribute to a culture of cooperation, vigilance, and accountability. This shared responsibility approach not only enhances trust and transparency but also gives communities the ability to take on local issues, lessening the dependence on law enforcement. Ultimately, incorporating shared responsibility into community policing facilitates inclusive decision-making, increases mutual respect, and results in more sustainable and responsive public safety.

Theme 2: Trust as a Process — Engagement, Communication, and Fairness Foster Confidence and Cooperation

Trust as process builds over time through regular contact, communication, and equitable treatment by the police. Such practices foster trust and lead to more cooperation by community members as relationships build and become

more positive over time (Lim et al, 2022; Anrango Narváez et al, 2023; Kulachai et al, 2023). The responses from the participants generally underscore that trust is not instantaneous but is developed through repeated interaction, equity, and communication. Member 1 underlines the significance of open communication and listening, demonstrating that with the police truly hearing the concerns of communities, confidence is built. Member 2 supports the same by acknowledging equitable and respectful treatment as central to building constructive encounters and trust. Member 4 further affirms that clear communication by the police reduces confusion and fosters understanding, which enhances cooperation. In the meantime, Member 6 highlights the importance of steady presence and approachability and sees regular, substantial interactions as contributing to sustaining trust in the long term. Collectively, their perspectives illustrate that trust is a process developed through time with transparency, fairness, and genuine relationship-building between the community and law enforcement. These are evident in the response of community members during the conduct of the interview:

"Having trainings and orientations is also very encouraging because it gives us knowledge and tools to help." (member 1)

"Meetings between the police and community members are very useful because they allow us to express our needs and concerns." (member 2)

"If people get to know the police and see them regularly, they will be more approachable and trusted. (Member 4)

"I hope the police continue engaging with people so that the relationship between the two grows stronger." (Member 6)

The theme underscores that police and community trust is a process developed by ongoing interaction, open communication, and equitable treatment. Regular interactions enable citizens to comprehend police motives more clearly, lower fear levels, and minimize uncertainty. Open communication encourages openness and respect, and equal treatment in actions and decision-making reinforces legitimacy and accountability perceptions. With time, such practices foster collaboration because individuals become increasingly certain that their concerns matter and are being responded to. Prioritizing involvement, truthfulness, and fairness, then, causes trust to become the basis for more effective partnerships as well as more effective community policing.

Studies continually point out that trust between the police and citizens is built through repeated interactions, good communication, and a sense of fairness. Tyler and Huo (2002) posit that procedural justice—respecting individuals, listening to them, and making transparent decisions—heightens police legitimacy and public confidence greatly. Likewise, Sunshine and Tyler (2003) point out that fairness and respectful treatment are more powerful in building trust than authority or fear of punishment. Myhill and Quinton (2011) also discovered that clear, open communication aids uncertainty reduction and creates a sense of partnership, causing citizens to find the police approachable and responsive. Additional research by Murphy et al. (2015) supports that participation through discussion, community gatherings, and communal projects provides avenues for collaboration and understanding. Skogan (2006) adds that civilian contacts with police on a regular basis in non-enforcement contexts enhance relationships and eliminate negative stereotypes. These results collectively indicate that trust

needs to be developed over time in terms of fairness, transparency, and genuine connection—illustrating how genuine engagement and dialogue are vital to establishing trust and maintaining cooperation in community policing.

The theme suggests that establishing and maintaining trust between the police and citizens takes commitment over a long period of time to interaction, fairness, and communication. Trust cannot be asked for but must be worked for through habitual actions that demonstrate transparency, respect, and accountability. When the police listen, are equal in their treatment, and are clear in their communication, citizens are more likely to be willing to cooperate and participate in safety programs. This process not only reinforces legitimacy and respect for each other but also sets the stage for cooperative problem-solving, successful crime prevention, and enduring peace and order.

4.0. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that community engagement in urban policing is shaped by complex emotional, cultural, and structural factors. Fear, mistrust, and negative past experiences initially discouraged community members from participating in law enforcement efforts. However, consistent fairness, respectful communication, and visible police presence helped transform fear into trust and encouraged cooperation over time. Structural and operational barriers such as limited awareness, poor communication, and inaccessible programs also weakened public participation and created a gap between police and community members. Despite these challenges, the study demonstrated that engagement can be strengthened through shared responsibility, transparency, and genuine partnership between law enforcers and citizens. Trust, as the foundation of community policing, is not built overnight but through continuous dialogue, fairness, and accountability. Ultimately, effective community engagement requires active collaboration where both the police and the community recognize their roles in maintaining peace, safety, and public confidence.

5.0. Recommendation

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that stronger collaboration between the police and the community be established through open communication and accessibility. Law enforcement agencies should create transparent and consistent channels of dialogue to ensure that community members are informed, heard, and involved in decision-making processes. Transparency and accountability must be prioritized to promote fairness and rebuild public trust, especially in communities affected by fear and negative past experiences.

Furthermore, community-based programs such as outreach activities, dialogues, and neighborhood watch initiatives should be regularly implemented to strengthen familiarity, trust, and cooperation. Police officers are encouraged to undergo continuous training that fosters empathy, cultural sensitivity, and respect toward citizens to address emotional and cultural barriers. Structural improvements must also be made by ensuring that programs and activities are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all sectors of society. Lastly, the researchers recommend sustaining long-term partnerships where both police and citizens share responsibility in maintaining peace and order, recognizing that public safety can only be achieved through mutual trust, participation, and cooperation.

Declarations

Source of Funding

This study did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not–for–profit sectors.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

All the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing equally.

Informed Consent

All participants in this study voluntarily gave their informed consent prior to their involvement in the research.

Availability of data and material

All supplementary documentation can be provided for the purpose of academic inquiry or verification.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable for this study.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable for this study.

Ethical Approval

The researchers adhered to the ethical protocols set by Misamis University.

References

[1] Miller, E.J. (2023). The concept of the police. Criminal Law and Philosophy, 17: 573–595. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11572-023-09682-8.

[2] Contreras, V., & Cribbs-Lorrant, T. (2025). The only Black police precinct in U.S. history: How Miami was policed during segregation. Teen Vogue. https://surl.li/jtookn.

[3] Blair, G., et al. (2021). Community policing does not build citizen trust in police or reduce crime in the Global South. Science, 374(6571): 1570–1575. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abd3446.

[4] Lovan, D., & Richer, A.D. (2024). Investigation after Breonna Taylor's killing prompts agreement on police reform in Louisville. AP News. https://surl.lu/nrakhj.

[5] Barry, C. (2023). One in five: Disparities in crime and policing. The Sentencing Project. https:// surl.lu/kfkyek.

[6] Yigzaw, Y., et al. (2023). Analyzing physical and socio-economic factors for property crime incident in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Heliyon, 9(2): e13282. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e13282.

[7] Anderson, C. (2024). June: Community engagement. National Policing Institute. https://surl.li/yqxhus.

[8] Toxigon (2024). Community policing strategies: Building trust and safety together. Toxigon. https://surl.li/salpjw.

[9] Nubani, L., Fierke-Gmazel, H., Madill, H., & Biasi, A.D. (2023). Community engagement in crime reduction strategies: A tale of three cities. Journal of Participatory Research Methods, 4(1). https://surl.li/tksafg.

[10] De, J. (2025). Laredo police build trust with community at Coffee with a Cop event. Laredo Morning Times. https://surl.lt/yzxhhb.

[11] Parkes-Hupton, H. (2025). Aussies take fight to young crims: “Fed up.” News.com.au. https://surl.li/gyhhou.

[12] Sevilla, D. (2025). Law enforcement and dispatch officials take part in press training. Midland Daily News. https://surli.cc/mehtyd.

[13] Osuh, C. (2024). “Shocking”: Chris Kaba verdict stokes old frustrations in Brixton. The Guardian. https://surl.lu/phdcjc.

[14] LaBella, J. (2025). Old Saybrook police chief announces retirement amid investigation. CT Insider. https://surl.li/ostqzg.

[15] Goldsmith, A. (2005). Police reform and the problem of trust. Current Sociology, 53(3): 443–470. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392105052727.

[16] Tornabene, R. (2024). Building bridges: Strategies for community-police relations. PIO Podcast – Life of a PIO. https://surli.cc/ucbiyt.

[17] Martell, N. (2024). 8 ways to approach police community engagement. Delib. https://surl.li/pghncx.

[18] McMillian, J. (2025). Fixing “broken windows” theory: Smart—not harsh—policing is the key to a safe and orderly city. New York Post. https://surl.li/cuxtsl.